

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2650

As Reported by House Committee On:
Housing

Title: An act relating to programs to end homelessness.

Brief Description: Creating programs to end homelessness.

Sponsors: Representatives Miloscia, Pettigrew, Ormsby, Roberts, Hasegawa and Sells.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Housing: 1/19/06, 1/26/06 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Changes the name of the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act to the Ending Homelessness Act;
- Creates the Interagency Council on Homelessness;
- Requires a Homeless Client Survey and Homeless Client Management Information System be implemented;
- Provides for additional funding through a \$2 million General Fund appropriation; and
- Adds performance measures and reporting and evaluation requirements to existing homeless-related RCWs.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 5 members: Representatives Miloscia, Chair; Springer, Vice Chair; Ormsby, Pettigrew and Sells.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Holmquist, Ranking Minority Member; Dunn, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCune and Schindler.

Staff: Robyn Dupuis (786-7166).

Background:

Homeless Housing Assistance Act Goal

The Legislature enacted the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act during the 2005 session, the goal of which is to reduce homelessness by 50 percent statewide and in each county by July 1, 2015. This goal is to be achieved through the identification of, and solutions to, the root causes of homelessness, as well as the implementation of a variety of programs to assist individuals move up the housing continuum from homelessness to stable housing.

Homeless Census

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED) coordinates an annual homeless census to count all homeless individuals in the state. Data collected from the census is used to develop and amend the DCTED's and local governments' 10-year Homeless Housing Plans and gauge program success toward interim and ultimate goals.

Homeless Housing and Assistance Program Funding

The Homeless Housing and Assistance Program is funded by a \$10 surcharge for certain documents recorded by the county auditor of previously recorded deeds of trust and documents recording a birth, marriage, divorce, or death.

The auditor retains 2 percent of the \$10 surcharge for collection of the fee. Of the remaining funds, 60 percent of the funds remain within the participating county of origin. Any city which assumes responsibility for reducing homelessness within its boundaries receives a percentage of the surcharge equal to the percentage of the city's local portion of the real estate excise tax.

The remaining funds of the total \$10 surcharge is remitted to the DCTED for program administration and to be distributed to participating counties and cities through the Homeless Housing Grant Program.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Interagency Council on Homelessness

The Interagency Council on Homelessness (Council) is created to be composed of policy level representatives of state agencies. The Council must be convened by August 31, 2006 and must meet two times each year. The Council must advise the DCTED on the creation of the State Ending Homeless Plan and work to align homeless-related services and activities among state agencies. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Corrections are specifically required to submit performance measures related to the housing status of their clients.

State Ending Homelessness Planning and Evaluation

The DCTED is required to address the fiscal and societal cost of the homeless crisis in the state ending homelessness plan. The DCTED will also annually evaluate local government plans and programs.

Washington Homeless Client Survey & Homeless Client Management Information System

By 2009, the DCTED shall implement the Washington Homeless Client Survey which will supplement the current annual Washington Homeless Census. Information about homeless individuals shall be collected and entered into the Washington Homeless Client Management Information System. Written consent is required from homeless individuals providing information for the survey. Confidentiality is required and states and local governments are required to develop privacy plans which shall be audited by the State Auditor in 2013.

Program Funding

In addition to the existing \$10 document recording surcharge for the Homeless Program, \$2 million is appropriated from the General Fund to the DCTED for the Homeless Client Management Information System. Of this funding, \$1.5 million must be distributed to the participating local governments for planning, evaluation, and homeless program activities.

Quality Management Program:

All local governments receiving over \$200,000 annually in funds through the Ending Homelessness Program and the surcharge in RCW 36.22.178 must implement a quality management program and apply to the Washington State Quality Award program every three years.

Homeless Families with Children Plan

The DSHS is required to report quarterly to the DCTED on performance measures included in the Homeless Families with Children Plan. The DCTED will annually evaluate the Homeless Families with Children plan and its results.

Homeless Families Services Fund (Washington Families Fund)

The Homeless Families Services program must submit quarterly reports to the DCTED which shall conduct an annual performance evaluation.

The DSHS Shelter Assistance Program

The DSHS will report to the appropriate legislative committees on performance measures related to the Shelter Assistance Program and must provide that report to the DCTED.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The allocation formula for the existing homeless \$10 surcharge reverts back to the formula used in the current statutes and all documents previously exempted from the surcharge continue to be exempted. The substitute includes the creation of the Interagency Council on Homelessness and requires state agencies to develop interagency strategies to address homelessness and also to report on housing outcomes for clients. The additional requirements of local plans required under the original bill were removed in the substitute. The Homeless Client Survey will be required annually, not monthly, and written permission need only be obtained for the survey, not the census as was required in the original bill. Local governments are not required to evaluate subcontractors. Statutes addressing the DSHS Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Treatment and Support programs were removed. The threshold for the local governments' mandate to implement quality management programs is lowered in the substitute

to \$200,000 annually in state funds from the homeless program and the other low-income housing surcharge currently in statute.

Appropriation: \$2 million.

Fiscal Note: Preliminary fiscal note available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (In support of original bill) Homeless programs clearly need more resources, although E2S2163 was a great start, it's clear that more funds are needed to solve homelessness in Washington.

(With concerns on original bill) E2S2163 has accomplished great things in a short period of time, but more time is needed to determine what legislative changes will be beneficial to the program. Many of the counties have just completed their first plans to end homelessness, it will be disheartening and frustrating to impose more guidelines and requirements at this time, particularly before they even have a chance to implement what they have worked on to date. The bill is also very complicated, it deals with a lot of issues and more could be accomplished if it were split up into smaller bills. The legislation should include requiring the establishment of an Interagency Council on Homelessness and obligating state agencies to report on housing outcomes for their clients. Although the bill includes a lot of language designed to maintain confidentiality for at-risk populations, there is still privacy concerns among some groups, like domestic violence service providers, that information on homeless clients will not be secure.

(Neutral to original bill) Although the premise and goals of this bill are wonderful, it's too early to make changes to requirements and activities for the homeless programs. Counties are just getting started with the plans they created, they should be allowed time to implement the plans and make recommendations for changes next year.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: (In support of original bill) Ruth Shearer, Advocate for Homeless.

(With concerns on original bill) Daniel Malone and Kim Conner, Washington State Council for the Homeless; Lynn Davison, Common Ground; Bill Block, Committee to End Homelessness in King County; Grace Huang, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

(Neutral to original bill) Jean Wessman, Washington State Association of Counties.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.